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the walls of the houses, and shutting out all view of these wooden structures. It had, however, to be kept in constant repair, and the house-reeve has to go round carefully to see that none of the whitewash had been rubbed off, nor any of the transverse bars sprung with the sun. Behind these the entire populace had to stay when the king, or any one of the queens, went out. Woe betide the wretch who was caught outside them when the procession had started. He might consider himself lucky if he escaped with only a belabouring from the fasces of the shrieking lictors. No one was supposed even to look through the little diamond-shaped holes. As a matter of fact they did; but by way of condoning for the offence, they rendered it more difficult by planting flowering shrubs between the bamboo houses and the lattice-work.

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The procession on the route out to the Lèya, the royal acre, to be ploughed, was magnificent. The king was clad in all his robes of state: the paso with the daungyôp, the peacock sacred to royalty; the long silk surcoat, or tunic, so thickly crusted with jewels that its colour could not be seen; the tharapu, the spire-like crown, also a mass of precious stones; the twenty-four strings of the Order of the Salwè across his breast; and over his forehead the gold plate, or frontlet. The great gates in front of the stairs from the Hall of Audience were opened for him, Except the King of the Golden Throne no one might pass through them; there was the low red postern at the side for meaner beings—a shrewd device to make every one bow his head to the palace, whether he liked it or not. His majesty mounted the white elephant, which none save he might ride—for is not the noble creature a king himself?

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The king mounted the Lord White Elephant at the palace of the latter, to the right of the Hall of Audience; but the princes and ministers, all of whom came to attend the great function in their robes of state, might not enter their howdahs till the stockade of the nandaw had been passed. Then they fell into line in order of precedence, the wuns and wundauks wearing their official mitres—tall red velvet hats, with the top curled back like a nautilus, and the base surrounded with a row of gilt spear-heads. The long

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644 796 crimson velvet cassocks edged with rich brocade were also worn, and every one paraded all the umbrellas, gold, or vermilion, or green, that he was entitled to.

Thus they pass through the official town into the suburbs. The road taken is that by the east gate, whence, in a line with the steps of the Hall of Audience, a broad way runs straight away to the blue Shan hills; or at least to where, in Mindôn's reign, the great Yankin-taung pagoda was being built, a few miles from where the hills rise, steep as out of a lake, from the flat rice lands. A death-like stillness prevails after the procession has passed the two timber guard-houses, between the tall columns of the eastern gate, surmounted by fantastic, triple-roofed teak pavilions, looking like Chinese joss-houses with their flamboyant carvings. The people are no doubt all there—we speak as those who know—crouching on their stomachs and peeping as best they can through yazamat and leaves of the bushes and legs of the soldiers that line the royal path all the way, striving their utmost to get a glimpse of the king and the splendour of his retinue; but they are not to be seen, and no one so much as sneezes. Thus the richly carved and gilt royal monastery is passed on the left; and immediately afterwards comparatively open ground is reached, stretching out on either side 796 of the high, raised road. A little farther on, half a mile 241 or so from the eastern gate, a halt is made at the selected 644 portion of the lèdawgyi. Ploughs stand ready in a long row, extending away as far as one can see; for all the princes and ministers must plough as well as the king. The royal plough is thickly covered with gold-leaf; the part on which his majesty stands—for it must not be forgotten that the Burmese plough is something like a giant rake, and is not really a plough to English ideas at all—is gold, roughened with pearls and emeralds. The milk-white oxen that draw it rival the Lord White Elephant in the splendour of their harness. Crimson and gold bands hook them on; the reins are stiff with rubies and diamonds; heavy gold tassels hang from gilded horns. The gold-tipped ox-goad his majesty wields is covered with jewels and flashes like a rod of fire in the sun.

The king ploughs a couple of furrows—or, rather, passes

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are used to strike them with. The notes produced are surprisingly clear and melodious. 534

Fiddles may often be heard played with greater or less skill, especially on the pagoda steps by blind and deformed beggars, but the instrument is not national, and is never, or but rarely, found where Europeans have not penetrated. The same may be said of the young Burmans who play in Rangoon on the concertina and the English fife and piccolo. It is flattering to national pride to notice with what accuracy and rapidity they pick up English airs. 177.53

But except at funerals and other solemn occasions instrumental music is looked upon not so much as a means of enjoyment in itself as an accompaniment to the human voice, and mere orchestral concerts would never draw the crowds which a single good singer can always command. The recitative character of the music is always more evident in the singing than in the instruments, and each "prince" or "princess" has individual peculiarities in the way of trills and staccatos introduced into the legitimate air. As the young musician learns by hanging about the band, so a vocalist follows an acknowledged great singer about and imitates his style, or at any rate learns the tunes and the words. The latter are, however, very immaterial, for the language itself is so pliant that it is easy to express the ideas in rhythm as you go on. Maung Tha Byaw, the great singer of his day, always made his songs as he sung them, and this was so well known that whenever he appeared, whether in a regular play or only to sing a few airs, there were always thirty or forty reporters sitting round to take down his words in their parabaik. This peculiarity of the Thabinwun occasionally got him into trouble. A somewhat incomprehensible piece of palace etiquette rendered it treasonable to sing a thanzan, a new song, before the king. Maung Tha Byaw several times, whether through too great laziness to learn the words, or from the force of habit, transgressed this rule, and was several times ordered out to execution. But he sang to the taunghmu and the pagwet, and these grim customers, the gaoler and the executioner, unable to resist the melody of this latter-day Orpheus, hid him away and exhibited some less talented 533 [644]

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language," and vows of vengeance against the ministers, who seem to have an irritating faculty of grinning all down their backs.

The journey to the palace is not a pleasant preparation. It is too hot to ride, and accordingly you decide to go in the apotheosis of a dog-kennel on wheels, which does duty for a carriage in Mandalay. There is not room for much more than one Englishman in the vehicle, and the only way you can get in is by scrambling over the backs of the bullocks. I shall never forget my first experience of a Mandalay carriage. After an exciting ten minutes spent in trying to circumvent a kicking bullock, I at length got in and sat down on the floor—there are no seats—to gaze out at the round hole by which I had got in. The rest of the party followed, each man in a kennel of his own. The beasts set off at a swinging trot over roads of the early depraved order, and in a couple of minutes we were all regretting that we did not brave the sun and ride, or even walk. However, the drivers disregard our entreaties, and hustle up the cattle all the more energetically. We pass over the moat, and through the enormous wooden gateway into the walled town. We enter by the a-mingala gate, the south-western, the only one through which corpses are allowed to be taken from the city. It is almost invariably used by Englishmen as being nearest to the Residency and the river, but no upper-class Burman will pass through it if he possibly can avoid doing so. After five minutes' more jolting we arrive at the outer stockade of the palace, and get out of our conveyances with some alacrity and a lot of bruises. Immediately inside the gate is a guard-house, with a cluster of the royal soldiery, who, as we come up, squat down on the ground and hold their Enfields in front of them at the third motion of the present, looking like frogs on a Christmas card.

We cross a wide open space, pass through the "Red Postern," and turn to the left, for it is to be a private reception, and we do not ascend the steps to the Hall of Audience. We pass a gallop which Thibaw has laid down for his ponies, and enter the Royal Gardens. They are not much to speak of. Laid out in squares, with raised paths, deep brickwork canals running in every direction, grottoes and

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644 "fads" of all sorts in every available place, they are rather tiresome, and we prefer to talk to a remarkable gentleman who meets us here. This is the Pangyet Wun, or governor of the glass manufactories—rather a mysterious title, seeing that there are no such works in the royal city. But names mean anything or nothing in Mandalay. The Pangyet Wun is the familiar example of Western flippancy triumphing over Eastern conceit and forgotten good manners. He speaks the English of the primer overlaid with the language of the young subaltern and the seafaring man on Atlantic steamers of the inferior class.

As we shake hands with him he smiles demurely, and says he regrets he cannot offer us "a liquor." "Wine or spirits, you know, are not drunk in the palace," and an apparition suggestive of a barbarian wink flits across his face. We have not long to talk with him, however. Everything, he says, is ready, and we make for a side-door into the palace, or rather into one of the numerous audience chambers connected with the nandaw, each having a name of its own, and being used according to his majesty's whim. We are to be received in the Hmaw-gaw, "the Crystal Palace," so called from the decoration of its walls, resplendent with bits of mirror and coloured glass. We have to put off our shoes before stepping into the palace, and do so not without dire misgivings, for in times gone by we had been to see King Mindôn, and have lively recollections of the nails in the floor. A Burman, they say, never likes to finish anything, and therefore does not drive home the nails in the planking of his house. People more versed in the ways of the nandaw assert that this is not the true reason, and declare that it is an ingenious method of making the presumptuous Kalā approach the neighbourhood of the Lord of Land and Sea in respectful fashion, with his eyes humbly lowered. It certainly is very effective in that way. You cannot gaze about you with any degree of freedom when you have a lurking suspicion that the next step will drive a nail into the ball of your big toe. Consequently every one used to go in with meekly downcast face, and respect to the sovereign was thus triumphantly enforced. But Thibaw disdains such petty ways of compelling outward respect. Has he not made

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the English Resident run away? Or perhaps it is the European experience of the Pangyet Wun that we have to thank. At any rate, the corridors and passages are covered with thick soft carpets, three or four deep, and we walk along in comfort, if with a somewhat undressed feeling.

It is not far to the Hmaw-gaw. We find the chamber almost empty. A thick carpet, woven in one piece, covers the floor, and the far side is raised a couple of feet above the rest of the room. On this dais stands a couch. The Pangyet Wun tells us to sit down and not to speak. We obey, and stare at the couch and a door behind it. Again we have misgivings. Mindôn Min used to keep visitors waiting a trifle of an hour or so, till they got so cramped that they had to be hoisted on to their legs. But it is not so with his son. He comes almost immediately, jerking himself suddenly in at the door, as if somebody had stuck a pin into him behind, walks hurriedly to the couch, kicking off his slippers on the way, and throws himself upon it, with his elbows sunk in the crimson and gold cushions. He looks straight at us for about thirty seconds, and then falls to examining his finger-nails and the carpet. He is embarrassed; his father was embarrassing. The pious potentate used to scrutinise his visitors (at a distance of twenty feet or so) through a field-glass, and people who were not overawed used to grin, which required explanation. King Thibaw comes alone, except that there is a page with cheroots. The gigantic gold spittoon and betel-nut box and other salivating and chewing paraphernalia, which were deposited before his late lamented father, are wanting. He knocks off the ash of his green cheroot on the carpet and presently lets it go out. Meanwhile the thandawsin, the royal herald, has commenced chanting our names, business, and the list of our presents. This is done in a high-pitched recitative, and takes a long time, for all the names, styles, and titles of his majesty are declaimed for a matter of quarter of an hour, each sentence ending with a long-drawn payā-a-ah.

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At last it is over, and Thibaw asks if we are well. We announce that we are, and the interpreter, who throughout sees fit to translate bald monosyllables into obsequious, not

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644 to say grovelling periods, says that by his majesty's merciful permission we are in the enjoyment of perfect health. Thibaw then demands our business. The interpreter replies that we have come to view the glories of his majesty's mighty kingdom, and to lay our heads under his golden feet. This is a lengthy formality, for an epitome of the titles comes in with every answer. Thibaw looks very ill at ease, and has an occasional glance at us out of the tail of his eye. Having inquired after the well-being of the Queen, the Viceroy, the Chief Commissioner of British Burma, and his dear brothers in Calcutta, who, he hopes, are being well treated, as befits their rank, it seems as if there was going to be a sudden end to the audience, to avert which we wildly grasp at the idea of saying that we had taken tickets in the royal lotteries, but had not been successful in the drawing. His majesty twirls his cheroot over his shoulder, which is a sign that he wants a light, and says he is very sorry, but hopes we will try again. We announce that we are going to make another attempt, and add, in the desperate hope of getting his majesty into a controversy, that lotteries are considered a very bad thing for the people in Europe. The interpreter gazes for three-quarters of a second reproachfully at us and says, that by reason of his majesty's great might, glory, and clemency, we are encouraged to make a fresh venture, and that we are lost in wonder at the wisdom which has fallen upon such a method of increasing the revenue, a system which had never occurred to the unilluminated minds of barbarian financiers. Burmese is a language with which some of us are acquainted, and which affords unusual facilities for the relief of the irritated mind, but while we are hesitating as to whether we shall break through Court etiquette and address the great Lord of Righteousness mouth to mouth, Thibaw graciously remarks that he is glad to hear that the wisdom of his ministers has increased the knowledge of political economy in the world, and adds that he is unacquainted with any trade which for an outlay of two rupees will bring in a return of ten thousand. Having announced that he will give orders to his ministers and officials to show us every respect while we remain under the shadow of his throne, he suddenly gets up

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and vanishes as rapidly as he appeared. The Pangyet Wun calls out, "Get on your legs, gentlemen, 'long chairs' are better than this sort of thing," and we obey with great alacrity, and are regaled outside with brandy and water of considerable potency, poured out of a teapot into teacups.

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643 Kin Wunmingyi, who, after all, had been to Europe and was
● [644] versed in public affairs, lost all influence, and was succeeded
[177·64] as adviser by the Taingda Mingyi, a statesman of the typical oriental kind, supple, unscrupulous and grasping. Thibaw even achieved a certain kind of popularity with his subjects. He insulted our representative and blustered at all foreigners, and finally frightened the Indian Government by covert threats into suddenly withdrawing the whole *personnel* of the Residency. Then it was announced by sound of gong all over Burma that the Sovereign of Land and Water, by reason of his great might and glory, had caused the hated English to flee from his sight, and would, in his own good time, carry the great peacock flag to the south, and plant it once more on the shores of the Gulf of Martaban.

643 It is a great triumph for the pôngyi's son, as he was
648 nicknamed when it was safe to do so, and it will be
175 remembered about him quite as long as the fiendish cruelty of his massacres. We have certainly not done with Thibaw yet. We cannot go on for ever keeping strong garrisons at Thayet-myo and Toungoo, our frontier stations, where the soldiers have little else to do but die of fever and cholera and heat-apoplexy. Constant scares ruin the trade in Rangoon, and, as Lord Ripon says, when we are attacked in our mercantile interests we are wounded in our most irritable point. The abrogation of the monopolies is little better than a sham, and the negotiations for a new treaty are little more sincere. Thibaw will not receive a new Resident in the Royal City, except shoeless and practically lying on his stomach. We can hardly agree to that again.

The rupture came six years later, brought about by secret treatings with France and autocratic dealings with the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation. The Burmese kingdom fell with the suddenness of a paralytic stroke, and King Thibaw was a prisoner within a month of his rejection of the British ultimatum. He now lives forgotten at Ratnagiri.

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# CHAPTER L

## KING THIBAW

### III.—A KADAW DAY

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"THE princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces were gathered together and fell down and worshipped at what time they heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music."

That is an exact description of the course of proceedings in Mandalay on a kadaw day. The gentlemen of the court and band as aforesaid, in the plain of Dura, must have greatly resembled Thibaw's worshippers, though it would be unfair to compare Nebuchadnezzar with the feckless last king of the Burmans. A kadaw-né means, literally translated, "a beg-pardon day." On such occasions all the officials, the tributary chiefs, and most eminent men in the country have to come to the palace and do homage and worship at the Golden Feet. There may be as many "Beg-pardon Days" during the year as his majesty pleases, but the most regular and best-attended, as well as the most brilliant, are always at the beginning and end of Lent, which extends, roughly speaking, from June to October. The end of Lent is probably the greatest occasion of all, and the audience sometimes, as was the case in 1880, extends over three days.

During Lent, every one is supposed to fast and be pious and improve his mind generally. On the conclusion of such a period, therefore, it is fitting that all loyal subjects should renew their allegiance to the Great Lord of Righteousness,

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644 805 [431] and prostrate themselves with humble regard at his magnificent feet. The giving of presents or kadaw—no one can go near the king without a present—is represented as a deprecatory offering to avert deserved punishment for offences.

644 The whole town is *en fête* on such occasions. The Lord Mayor's show, or the transformation scene in a pantomime, which are the stay-at-home Englishman's idea of supreme magnificence, are as nothing compared to the procession round the moat which encircles the city walls. Mingyis, Atwinwuns, Sawbwas, Myosas; officials and vassals in formidable numbers and with terrible names; each man accompanied and adorned with his utmost possessions in the way of man, beast, gauds, and raiment, file proudly round preparatory to entering the palace. The description of a prince's order of going may suffice to give an idea of the whole. First come the lictors, prancing along with their fasces and hoarse shoutings, yelling to everybody to clear the way, regardless of the fact that the populace is all down on its knees by the side of the road, shikhoing reverentially. They are about half a dozen in number, and to a short-sighted man appear to be stark naked. A closer inspection with a glass, however, reveals the fact that they have some regard for decency, if they have little for anything else. Behind them comes the family band, braying, and clashing, and skirling its loudest. Undisturbed by the din, stalk composedly in the rear half a dozen elephants, the first couple splendid tuskers, in complete war-array, with fighting howdahs on their backs, and brilliant housings trailing to the ground; the second pair with ordinary furnishings, and the others with no further encumbrance than the mahaut on their backs. As near to these as their syces can persuade them to go, caper a number of led horses, harnessed with gay scarlet saddles, and saddle flaps, with tassels of the same colour sweeping the earth. Immediately in their rear is a bright-hued cloud of retainers, armed with guns, spears, and swords, and many carrying fans of all sorts and sizes. Floating over their head like a great red cloud, is the prince's wide satin-fringed umbrella, or perhaps it may be a gold one, if he enjoys his master's favour. Then there is a rabble of

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body-servants, carrying a gold-sheathed sword, a velvet pillow, spittoons, betel-nut boxes, and a variety of other things of uses more or less obvious. Last of all, surrounded by his page body-guard, comes the mintha himself, reclining in a wan, a finely-carved litter, borne by many shoulders. Many of the officials are, of course, unable to make such a grand display as this, but every one does his utmost to surpass his fellows in some point or other, and the result is a spectacle which would furnish abundance of valuable notions to a pantomime scenic artist racking his brains for novelties.

All the retinue is left outside when they come to the palace and ascend the broad flight of steps flanked by the two great gilded cannon, and approach the nandaw, the magnificent Hall of Audience. At stated points they pay lowly reverence to the graceful spire which rises over the throne and marks the centre of the palace, of the town, of Burma, and therefore of the universe. Inside the nandaw each man has his special place, according to his rank, Englishmen being ordinarily told off with ministers of the third grade. They sit there and smoke, placidly awaiting events.

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The Hall of Audience is a fine building of its kind; a long columned chamber, open on three sides, with gilt and red pillars, and a profusion of ornaments. The walls are made gorgeous with bits of looking-glass, porcelain, fragments of coloured glass, a mosaic of queer odds and ends fastened on with a resinous gum. This style of ornamentation is peculiarly Burmese, and is really very striking, though the materials may not seem promising. The effect of the whole is unique, if a little bewildering. It is like a compound chromotrope out of order. But close inspection gives an impression of tawdriness, and the national Burmese carelessness appears through all. Round the tops of the wooden walls runs beautifully carved lattice-work, but some of it has got broken in one place, and at another all the gilding has come off. There are some richly ornamented doors, but hinges have not been available when they were put up, and they swing on a sort of ball and socket contrivance which serves the purpose, but makes close-fitting and easy movement impossible.

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341 The throne stands at the far end of the hall on a high raised dais. It diminishes by a gradation of little ledges to mid-height, and then similarly expands, like one notched pyramid thrust down on another. Those of the royal blood sit ordinarily in front on either side of the dais, but there are lamentably few of the royal blood nowadays.

Every one is collected now. The scene is such as can be seen nowhere in the world but in Burma, and in Burma only in perfection in the Hall of Audience. A Burmese crowd is always a gay sight, but when all the highest in the land have assembled in the yôndaw, it is magnificent. The Tennysonian "wind-stirred tulip beds" is a tempting phrase, but it hardly seems sufficient. A stirabout of rainbows has an oriental sound about it, and perhaps more fitly suggests the brilliant contrasts of colour. What a magnificent sight it must be from the throne; the eye passing over the gaily dressed figures, every face bent low to the ground, down the broad steps, and through the towering eastern gate, over spires and pagodas away to the shaggy dark Shan hills beyond, like the entries to King Arthur's palace that

> Open'd from the hall
> At one end one, that gave upon a range
> Of level pavement where the king would pace.
> At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
> And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
> Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers.

644 Little wonder the king of Burma thinks himself a deity.

Meanwhile the collected worshippers smoke cheroots and chew betel, and talk freely. Suddenly a little bell tinkles, and every one is grovelling on his stomach in a second. A purple curtain is drawn aside, and down a long corridor, laid with crimson and gold carpet, the Sovereign of Life and Death comes with a hurried, uneven step. He is in full regal dress, and the broad gold shoulder-belt of the salwè and the towering jewelled crown on his head, seem to weigh heavily on him as he ascends wearily to the throne. Now comes the presentation of the kadaw. The actual presents are all lying tumbled in a heap somewhere, and his majesty probably never sees them at all. Lists are made out on palm-leaf, scratched on with a sharp-pointed style, and these are

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brought up by a thandawgan. The sight is in every way a remarkable one, and quite in keeping with the semi-barbaric character of the surroundings. The herald starts from the eastern gate, about three hundred yards off, and in full view from the hall the whole way. Across the wide open space between the outer and inner stockades, and up between the gilded cannon he comes, with a fantastic, prancing gait, waving the palm-leaves at arm's length, and bowing lowly to the ground at every ten paces. Up the steps and between a long double line of the gorgeously uniformed ahmudan, and the blue-jacketed marines with the anchor on their spiked helmets, all presenting arms. Throughout the whole ceremony, the courtiers within the hall, at intervals of a minute or less, raise a long-drawn shout of payā—a word expressive of deity. When at last the thandawgan reaches the throne he bows thrice, deposits the palm-leaves reverentially, and lies prone. They are read out in part, or altogether, or not at all, according to his majesty's pleasure. Then he commences to talk. He is much more fluent in a grand audience than he is at a private interview. He asks one minister how the lottery under his charge is filling up; another what news there is from the army now fighting against the Shans: a French engineer is questioned with regard to some works going on in the royal gardens; a governor of a remote province enjoined to be regular in collecting the ngwedaw, the royal tax. His monastic studies have given him command of a copious fund of lofty moral sayings, and these he scatters about freely, and sends away aspirants to the royal favour exultant in the feeling that some golden words have been addressed, if not to them directly, at any rate to some one near them in the row. An audience occasionally lasts a couple of hours, so that Europeans, if they are at all stiff in the joints, are apt to get frightfully cramped, and afford unrighteous amusement to malicious old wuns by their uneasy attempts to find a more comfortable arrangement of their legs. Such receptions are, therefore, not in favour with Englishmen, except those who may be in the royal service, or who are negotiating for a grant of some kind, and therefore wish to be well with his majesty. The king smokes a gigantic white cheroot all the

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time, and chews betel simultaneously, making up the morsel himself very often. Many of those in the hall smoke also, but the operation cannot be conducted with any great degree of comfort when your nose is close to the nether [276] extremity of the spine of the man in front of you. In former days pipes were often smoked, but the bowls were always thrust through holes in the floor made for the purpose.

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Thibaw's apparent affability at these public audiences counteracts the effect of any other habits he may have, not so favourably viewed by Buddhists, and there are, perhaps, not a few of his subjects with whom he is possibly more popular than any king of Burma has been since the days of Alaungpaya the founder of the dynasty. His faults are thought to be those of his ministers and advisers. His easy-going indolence is the end of the desire of all his race. But it is not likely that his reign will be long. There is too much scheming and plotting going on in Mandalay just now for that. If Thibaw dies a sovereign he will be lucky. In the meantime the king rises and disappears behind the purple curtain. The durbar disperses immediately. The worshippers return home rejoicing and damn the king's enemies.

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## CHAPTER LI

### THE PALACE

THE palace of Mandalay lies in the centre of the four-square city, like the innermost of a series of Chinese carved boxes. The capital is a city within a city. The greater part of the wide plain from the Irrawaddy to the Shan hills, a space of about five miles broad and as many long, down to the Dôtta wadi, the Amarapura river, is laid out in wide roads running at right angles to one another, with abundance of houses of all kinds, from the brick house of the Chinaman, with its cumbrous tiles that bend in the rafters, and the white-plastered, flat-roofed habitation of the Mogul or Surati merchant, to the wood or bamboo dwelling of the Burman. They are not very close together, but there is plenty of space, and every house has its patch of garden, or clump of plantain trees, and its wide court where the buffaloes and the ox-cart can be disposed comfortably. But these only form the suburbs. The Myo, the city proper of Mandalay, is a huge walled square, each face a mile and an eighth long. The mud brick built walls are nearly thirty feet high and about three thick, backed with a heavy mass of earth, but though they would be hard to batter down, there are no guns mounted for their defence on the bastions which rise at intervals of about two hundred yards, each surmounted by an open-sided teak pavilion, carved in the usual gabled, joss-house, spire-like fashion. The crest of the parapet is deeply denticulated, with no other apparent advantage than that of ornament. There are twelve gates to the city, three on each side, but only one bridge to each three over the moat, except on the west, where there are two, one opposite the

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361 amingala or south-west gate, specially reserved for the passage of funerals. Outside every gate is a post bearing the name and emblem of the gate, the latter being the signs of the zodiac. Sixty feet, or thereabouts, from the walls, runs all round a deep moat, about fifty yards broad, covered in many places with the lotus plant that the Buddhist loves. Here and there upon it float a number of royal craft, state barges, and despatch boats, some of them richly gilded, with the kalawaik, the crane, carved on the stern, others foundered and lying rotting, with their lofty sterns rising high in the air. Covering each gate is a traverse, or crenelated barbican, of the same construction as the walls. Inside, the streets of the city run parallel to the walls. They are wide and fairly well kept wherever the king is likely to pass, but there is no attempt at metalling. Young trees line the sides, and
[364] down most of them run little streams of water. There is no attempt at a drainage system, but the town is essentially clean and airy, the pigs and pariah dogs acting as scavengers, and the constant open spaces ensuring ventilation. Right
● 644 341 in the centre is the palace, which has two successive enclosures. The outer is a quarter of a mile square, and consists of a high teak palisade, very massive and compact. Within this is a wide open space laid out as an esplanade, inside of which is a brick wall, edged round a great part of the way by the houses of high ministers and court officials. The outer court has four gates, each presided over by a special commander; the north, or water gate, being only available for the royal barges. Except for members of the palace household, there is only admittance to the inner enclosure by the gate on the eastern face. There is a special portal in the centre here, opened only for the king, and none but the Lord of the Golden Throne may use it. All else must enter by the taga-ni, the red postern, a cramped little gateway, which makes the smallest man involuntarily bend his head as he approaches the golden palace. The front of the building is decorated with gilding and tinsel work, which looks well when it is new, but after the rainy seasons would be better not there at all. To the left is the Hlutdaw, the Hall off the Supreme Council, a detached structure, raised some feet off the ground, and perfectly open; the roof, richly

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carved with flowers and figures, and adorned with the usual flamboyant pinnacles, supported on massive teak pillars, painted vermilion colour at the base, and gilt higher up. Straight ahead is the great Hall of Audience, a colonnade, or columned arcade, extending along the entire eastern front, and opening directly upon it. At the end of a pillared vista stands the throne, on a dais, reached by five steps from the level of the hall. The top is a cushioned ledge, like the box in a theatre. Just over the throne, and in the centre of the palace, which is the centre of the city, which is the centre of Burma, which is the Turanian "hub" of the world, rises the seven-roofed spire, emblematic of royalty and religion. The princes of the highest rank sit in front to the right of the throne; those of the blood-royal, but not so closely connected, to the left. Then in regular gradation, opposite one another, the wungyi, atwinwuns, wundauks, and the minor officials. On either side of the hall of audience and behind are a number of minor throne-rooms, not rooms in the English sense of the word, but simply open roofed spaces, separated from each other by skirtings of planking, covered with gold-leaf, and supported by a multitude of teak pillars, dyed for the greater part of their height a deep red. Some rooms are almost entirely gilt, others are adorned with wall-paintings, others, again, with the favourite mosaic of bits of mirror and coloured glass, framed in a gilt network. Every room is furnished with one or more stands of arms; there is a rack of sadly ill-cared-for muskets round the throne itself. The palace is, in fact, a gigantic armoury. All the cannon and guns in the country are kept there. Hence it is that when the palace is taken by a usurper, the country is conquered. The abundance of gold-leaf ought to make the effect splendid, but the quantity of alloy there is in the gilding makes it speedily lose its glitter, and the general impression is that of dinginess, if not indeed of actual slip-shod tawdriness. But to be seen at its best the palace should be visited on a great beg-pardon day, when the rough plank floors are covered with gorgeous rugs and carpets, and the halls are filled with officials dressed in all the hues of the rainbow.

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There are a variety of matters to be carefully observed by all who enter, or have anything to do with the palace.

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644 Best known is the regulation with regard to the wearing of shoes. Burmans must remove them as soon as they enter the palace enclosure, just as they would on going inside of the parawun of a pagoda or a monastery. Englishmen and white foreigners generally are required to take off their
[341] boots whenever they begin to ascend a step—the whole palace and all the buildings near it being on a brick platform some ten feet or more above the level of the ground. There are always a number of dancers and jugglers and loiterers about the royal buildings, and the necessity of being separated from your shoes sometimes leads to the loss of them altogether. It is on record that a British Resident incurred this misfortune, and had to make the best of his way, partly in a pair of Burman sandals, and partly on his stocking soles —as being preferable—to the outside of the teak stockade where his pony was waiting for him.

Another ceremony is that of shekhoing to the spire, the external emblem of the throne. All Burmans must do this at each of the gates, at the foot of the steps, and at intervals in between, according to loyalty, or the supposed friendly or hostile attitude of lookers-on. All the early English ambassadors had to conform to this regulation, notably Cox and Baker, the latter dropping on his knees. After an intermediate stage of taking off their hats, permission was gained to dispense with everything but the removal of shoes and sword. But the court rejoices in the fact that no one can pass through the red postern without bending his head, regulations or no regulations.

No arms whatever can be taken into the palace, not even —perhaps I should say, least even, in view of conspiracies— by the royal princes. Similarly, all umbrellas must be left at the outer gate of the palace, except by members of the royal household, who may carry them to the foot of the steps of the audience hall. Common people must lower them when they pass any of the gates outside. Arrest, or rough handling by the guards, would be the infallible result of non-compliance. Another rule is that you must take no money out of the palace. You may take in as much as you please.

No one in the palace, or indeed in the whole town, must sleep otherwise than with his feet turned outwards from the

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spire. To show the soles of the feet to the throne is high treason. This is awkward for the inhabitants of some quarters, for there is a rule applying to all Buddhists, that they must not place their feet towards the east, where the sun rises and whence the next Buddha, Arimadeya, will come, nor to the west, where the bawdi bin stands, or stood, the tree under which Shin Gautama attained the supreme wisdom. The superstition is probably derived from the Brahmins, who threaten grievous dangers to the man who places his feet on the shadow of a dewa, a king, a teacher, a saint, or another man's wife.

The frequent change of locality of the palace, and therefore of the capital, is a peculiarity of Burma. There are about a score of towns in the country which have been at one time or other the metropolis. Such are Tagaung, Old Pagān, and Shwebo, above Mandalay; Prome (under the title Tharekettara), Pagān, Sagaing, Ava, and Amarapura, below it. The last two are the best known; indeed some people to the present day persist in talking of the "Kingdom of Ava," though that once brilliant capital has been little better than a jungle for a great many years, and the lines of the old walls can only be traced with difficulty.

It is hardly correct to say, as most writers on Burma have hitherto done, that with a new king there should be a new capital. This has very frequently been the case, but the matter does not altogether depend upon the accession of a new sovereign. It is brought about by a very much more gruesome (the word is used advisedly) circumstance. On the foundation of a new capital, there are always a certain number of people buried alive. The idea is that they become nat-thein, that their spirits haunt the place where they were put to death, and attack all persons approaching with malevolent intentions. The notion is entirely due to the royal astrologers, the Brahmin pônnas, and as being repugnant to the tenets of Buddhism, is strenuously denounced by the true brethren of the yellow robe. But it fits in very well with the popular superstition regarding the existence of spirits, and has hence always firmly maintained its ground. It is a matter of common knowledge that this idea of

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sanctifying a building with human sacrifices is a notion which has prevailed in all parts of the world at different times, and instances of horrors of the kind are not unknown in Europe.

The virtue of the sacrifices only lasts a certain time, and when it is gone a new city should be built. There are certain signs, added to public disasters, which point out to the initiated when this alteration of site should take place. Mandalay was commenced in 1858, and two years later the seat of government was transferred from Amarapura, some five or six miles down the river. When the foundations of the city wall were laid, fifty-two persons of both sexes, and of various age and rank, were consigned to a living tomb. Three were buried under each of the twelve city gates, one at each of the four corners, one under each of the palace gates, and at the corners of the timber stockade, and four under the throne itself. The selection had to be made with care, for the victims were required to be representative people, born on special days of the week, and the boys buried were not to have any tattoo marks on them, the girls not to have their ears bored. When it was known that the troops were making the collection, no one was to be seen about the streets, except in great bands in the middle of the day. The government gave a series of magnificent dramatic performances, but no one went to see them. Eventually, however, the tale was made up, and the building went on apace. Along with the four human beings buried at the corners of the city were placed four jars full of oil, carefully covered over and protected from any damage that might come from the weight of earth pressing down upon them. These were examined every seven years by the royal astrologers, and as long as they remained intact the town was considered safe.

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At the third examination in 1880, however, it was found that the oil in two of the jars was either completely dried up or had leaked out. One was pretty far gone, and the fourth alone remained in a tolerably satisfactory state. At this very time, the January and February of 1880, a terrible scourge of smallpox was decimating the town, and two of the royal house, King Thibaw's infant son, his only child,

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and the ex-Pagān Min, the cock-fighting king, had fallen victims. This was bad enough, but other signs portending evil had happened. One of the most valued of the crown jewels, the Nansin Baddamya, had disappeared, a huge ruby, cherished as emblematic of the fortune of the dynasty since the days of Alaungpaya. A tiger in the royal gardens escaped from his cage, a most ominous circumstance, not for the poor wretch whom he killed and half ate before he could be recaptured, but for the city and the entire kingdom. The appearance of wild animals in a town is a sign that it will speedily turn to a wilderness. It was the discovery of a tiger and some deer in the environs of Amarapura which decided the fate of that "City of the Immortals." All these circumstances, coupled with the outward and visible sign of the wrath of the spirits in the shape of the plague of small-pox, decided the pônnas at once. It was no use filling the jars with oil again, or putting in fresh ones. Such parsimonious measures would be considerably worse than useless. A full conclave of the astrologers voted by a large majority for the change of the capital. This, however, neither the ministers nor Thibaw Min would hear of. Mandalay is very different from Amarapura and Ava. There are too many solid brick houses and mills and public manufactories —none of them working, it is true, but too costly to be abandoned—in the present capital to admit of its being thrown over in the old casual way, when a royal order forced everybody to migrate, on pain of imprisonment or death. The pônnas therefore held another meeting, and it was decided that the only other alternative was the offering of propitiatory sacrifices. At the instance of the Pônna Wun, a truculent old villain, it was resolved that the number should be the highest possible: a hundred men, a hundred women, a hundred boys, a hundred girls, a hundred soldiers, and a hundred foreigners. This the king agreed to, and a royal mandate was signed, and arrests forthwith commenced. A frightful panic spread in Mandalay after the first day. Every steamer leaving the capital was crowded to suffocation, boats went down the river in dozens, and there seemed very possibility that Mandalay would be deserted. Then the ministers took fright at the indignation which the

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644 631 782 announced massacres caused in England, and the whole thing was countermanded and denied. But upwards of a hundred people had been arrested, and some of these, when liberated months afterwards, declared that in the dark nights of terror, when no one ventured about Mandalay streets, people were buried under each of the posts at the twelve gates, as a compromise between the fear of the spirits and the fear that the English troops would cross the frontier. 644 787 Each of these posts bears an image of an animal from one of the seals of the king, and before the post sits a figure of a bilu, with a thick club, to act as watchman, in case the human guard should go to sleep. As Burman sentries generally sleep sounder than other people, the propitiation of these spirits at any rate was a very imperative precaution. Whether the oil-jars were filled and reburied *alone* is a dark mystery. But the smallpox left Mandalay, and the place is as happy as ever it was, which, however, is not saying much.

644 361 177·36 The British town of Mandalay is very different from that described. The Palace stockade has gone, and with it very many of the suites of apartments, notably in the women's quarter. The Hall of Audience for a time was converted into a Tamil Mission chapel; the Hlutdaw into a hideous collection of clerks' offices. This has been changed owing to the indignant protests of English visitors. Most of the Palace Halls are now empty: even the Upper Burma Club has been turned out.

The old City has now become cantonments with a few scattered barracks, officers' quarters, and wide stretches of grass. What formerly constituted the suburbs is now Mandalay town. The former execrable roads are now among the best in Burma. But many of the notable buildings, the elaborate monasteries, and gilt shrines have been burnt. Mandalay is certainly a dwindling town; the only question is how long it will remain the second town in Burma.

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Though prose and poetry had thus assumed definite forms by about the fourteenth, or early fifteenth century, the drama was unknown until very much later. The first real Burmese drama appeared, though it had its origins some decades earlier, only towards the close of the eighteenth century, and during the next hundred years it developed and then decayed. Burmese dramatic literature developed in a historical sequence and in a way essentially similar to that of the Elizabethan drama. But why the similarity? Is it accident? Is it because of the similarity in the geographical isolation of the two countries? Or, is there a definite way in which all dramas have to develop in natural sequence?

## 2. Sources of Information

The history of Burmese drama can be divided into six stages. First, there is the age of the *Nibbathkhin*, comparable to the English miracle play, ending about 1752. Second, we have, from 1752 to 1819, the period of the interlude[1] (comparable to the English morality and interlude) and the court drama. Third, we have the period of the dramatist, U Kyin U, 1819 to 1853. Fourth, we have the period of the poet, U Pon Nya, 1853 to 1878. Fifth, there is the period of decadence, 1878 to 1886. Sixth, we have the time from 1886 to the present day. As dates are in many cases uncertain in determining the periods I am taking the reigns of various kings. As the drama depended much on the court and the victories and defeats of the king, perhaps I am justified in so doing. In any case, if a date is wrong, it is wrong by not more than two or three years.

The time before 1752 is the most difficult period as far as research is concerned. The centuries that followed the fall of Pagan—the time of internal wars, 1287 to 1531—saw the rise of a vernacular literature, which is found existing in the Empire of 1531 to 1752.[2]

arranges its extracts in more or less chronological order, and therefore gives a good idea of the development. The subject is outside the scope of this work but I mention it to show how late the first appearance of Burmese drama was as compared with other branches of Burmese literature.

[1] The term 'interlude' is explained in chap. i.

[2] Perhaps it will not be out of place to give a short summary of the history. The various small States into which the country broke up after 1287 gave place, after some fifty years of incessant strife, to Ava, the kingdom of the Burmese, and Pegu, that of the Talaings. The small principality of Toungoo under Ava rebelled and conquered the whole of Burma in 1531.

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accounts regarding it. Apart from the notes gathered by my father, I base my information on the accounts given to me orally by my grandmother and grand-aunts who actually saw the interludes performed.

In support of the oral tradition regarding the nature of the interlude, there are some echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U. He developed the interlude into a proper play, but the change was not a sudden one, and in his plays we find echoes of the interlude in its various stages. His plays are considered in detail in another chapter. There are also contemporary references to the interlude. Even from an English pen we have an account. Colonel Yule in 1855 saw an entertainment midway between the interlude and the developed plays of U Kyin U.[1]

The period of the court plays offers an easier task for research. The *Rama* play from Siam is preserved, with adaptations, it is true, but with notes on the original when a change was made in the preserved version.[2] The other Siamese play of *Eenaung* has come down to us. The poem *Rama-yagan* which Burmanized the *Rama* story has also come down. Accounts of the performances of the court plays and the recitation of the poem at court are many and well known. From the time when they were first composed down to the present day, the works of these court poets and dramatists have been studied and read. The influence of these works on the interlude is suggested, not only by the 'internal evidence' in U Kyin U's plays, but also by the editorial prefaces to the works in their various editions.

Though only three plays of U Kyin U exist at the present day as far as is known, the period is quite easy of research, because references and notes regarding him occur in various records of the court and the nobility, and because the Burma Research Society has published new editions of two of his plays; and though the prefaces to them are short and no attempt is made to make a complete study, suggestions for further study and research are made by the editors.

The period of U Pon Nya offers the easiest task, as compared with other periods, so far as research is concerned. All his plays are

[1] H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*. His description of the dramatic entertainment he saw is considered again in the next chapter in connexion with Sir William Ridgeway's theory of the development of the Burmese drama.

[2] There is a copy of the *Rama* play in the British Museum. It is wrongly catalogued as by U Ku, who was only the editor. All these plays and the poem have been printed again and again, and are easily obtainable in Burma.

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generation of continual warfare which might well have exhausted the race, shows that the exploits of Alaungpaya were no mere flash in the pan, but were broad-based on the energy of the race as a whole. . . . The chronicles for the period are verbose and pompous, but it is impossible to read them without being struck with their fierce pride.[1]

It was during this age of triumph, after the Chinese invaders had been sent back defeated and people could breathe again without anxiety, that the Siamese *Rama* was produced at the Burmese court for the first time.

The court of Ava, then the capital of Burma, was in many ways comparable to the court of Elizabeth after the victory over Spain. Glory and wealth and splendour surrounded the king and his courtiers. Masters in the arts of war, they were also masters in the arts of peace. Almost everyone was learned, and the ablest soldiers and statesmen were also the foremost poets. Queens and ladies-in-waiting vied with princes and lords in the study and practice of learning and literature. Experts in the study of Pali, Sanskrit, and Buddhistic lore, keen students of foreign institutions and literatures, they were essentially Burmese, and enriched their own language and literature with borrowings from all sources. The period 1770 to 1824, the date of the first British conquest, that period of triumph, may easily be termed the age of translations, so keen were the people for knowledge from all sources. Siamese romances, Pali *Jatakas*, Chinese histories, Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, a history of Portugal, a Sanskrit work on sexual science—this list made at random shows clearly the range and variety of the translations. The court led the people in the pursuit of learning and literature. The courtiers were learned, the king was a patron of learning, and at the court the captives and hostages numbered among them great scholars and poets from conquered States. After the toils of war, men turned towards learning for rest and recreation. Men gloried in their country and studied their own literature, history, and institutions, and that study naturally led to the study of those of other countries. Almost everyone studied and almost everyone wrote. The age of triumph was an age of learning.[2]

The Siamese court plays appealed to the imagination of the court. The Siamese captives longed for their native entertainment.

[1] *History of Burma*, p. 258.

[2] Some account of the learned atmosphere of the court and of its more famous translators and poets is given by G. E. Harvey, op. cit., pp. 249 and 250.

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644 They themselves took part in the production of *Rama*, though it seems
536* that most of the actors at the Siamese court were professional; but once the play had been well established in its new home, only professional actors took part in the actual presentation, for the prejudice against the actors and the acting profession was strong: 'actors and
[533] beggars, eaters of food thrown away as waste.' Though the play was reproduced faithfully with all its dramatic qualities, the courtiers were more interested in the songs, which were new both in tune and in form. The *Rama* play at once enriched Burmese music and verse-forms. But the court did not at once realize that a new art had come. The Burmese equivalent of the English word 'play' was still uncoined. They called *Rama* a *zat*, a derivative from *Jataka*. *Zat* had by then come to mean a story; it could mean any story, though to distinguish it from a Birth Story, *hto-zat* (made-up *zat*) was used to denote a non-*Jataka* story. However, *zat* did not include fables or moral tales or legends and fairy tales. The Burmese interlude was without a name, and the courtiers realized the world of difference that lay between the *Nibhatkhin* and the Siamese entertainment. Therefore, the courtiers just called *Rama* a *zat*; the name suggested itself as they believed the *Rama* story to be a *Jataka* story.
536* However, when *Aindarwuntha*, the companion play to *Rama* at
178 the Siamese court, was later introduced to the Burmese court, the courtiers coined the term *nan-dwin zat* or 'palace-story', for that play had nothing to do with the *Jatakas*, and a new name was needed. When the *Rama* play reached the people, they thought it to be a specimen of the native *Nibhatkhin* or *Jataka*-shown-as-pageant and called it *Rama-khin* or *Rama*-shown-as-pageant. It was only when the native interlude had been moulded into a more developed art through the influence of the Burmese court drama that the term *pya-zat* (the equivalent of the English 'play') was introduced. It is of course impossible to ascertain when and by whom the word was first coined, but by U Kyin U's days, *pya-zat* or 'shown-story' had passed into general use.

To return to the court. The play was presented with Siamese (which were very similar to the Cambodian) dresses and costumes;
644 it was a faithful reproduction of the Siamese model. The introduction
536* of Burmese elements into the play through the professional actors was prevented by the tradition of rigid faithfulness to the Siamese model. The Siamese courtier-captives of course discouraged any interference with the form of their entertainment, which they took to

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be a perfect art; probably they thought the Burmese, as far as dramatic representation was concerned, to be barbarians. Moreover, many of the Burmese scholars themselves were against any substantial changes in the presentation of the play at their court. They were for borrowings from, and imitations of, the Siamese play, but they held that the model must be kept unchanged and intact. Their scholastic mind was such. The slightest distortion of the model called forth protests. When the Siamese play, *Aindarwuntha*, was translated as *Eenaung*, there was bitter criticism. The hero of the play had two names; the official title *Aindarwuntha* given by the king of the gods, and the palace name of *Eenaung*. The Siamese called their play *Aindarwuntha*, but the Burmese translator called it *Eenaung*, for that name was easier to say. The play was known as *Eenao* (only a slightly different pronunciation of the same name) in Cambodia. All the same, there were protests against the Minister Myawaddi's calling his translation *Eenaungyat*. Therefore, the scenes (of the *Rama* play) were presented in the same sequence as in the original, the characters were the same, and the story remained the same. However, changes were introduced in the actual words of the songs and speeches. Such changes were considered legitimate because such slight modifications were allowed even at the Siamese court, thereby keeping the play fresh. References to the topic of the day at the court, to Burmese ideals and ideas, to the wit of an actor: they naturally caused slight variations. Withal, the tradition of rigid faithfulness to the original remained. The gesture, rather than actual acting and facial expression, was of great importance in the Siamese play, and that the Burmese court rigidly followed. Gesture was of great importance in the Sanskrit drama, and elaborate treatises were written on the various gestures and their meaning. The code of the gesture in the Sanskrit drama was as rigid as it was elaborate. In the Siamese play, it was very much less elaborate, but still very rigid. For example, when Rama left the court of the Malay king, all the courtiers had to pay homage in an elaborate and very formal way. It is difficult to ascertain the reason of the importance of the gesture in the play; the Sanskrit drama may have influenced it; or the Siamese court wished to show to the common people the manners and customs of their king's palace; or maybe where the stage-lighting was extremely bad, facial expression could not be seen, and therefore gesture alone could convey the meaning to the audience, of course, apart from the actual dialogue. However, the importance of the

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536* 201 gesture passed on to the Burmese reproduction of the play. The rigid tradition soon called forth protests, if not in actual words, then in deeds. If the *Rama* play could not be changed to meet Burmese tastes, other plays would have to be invented. As a result, a native court drama came into being.[1]

## 4. The Burmese Court Drama

536* 175 644 538 It was during the reign of Hsinbyushin under whom the victories against the Siamese and the Chinese had been won, that the *Rama* play was first presented at court. He was succeeded by Singu, who was king from 1776 to 1782. Singu could appreciate and compose good poetry when sober, but such occasions were rare. All the same, the learned atmosphere of the court was maintained, for his queen, the daughter of the famous commander-in-chief who defeated the Siamese and the Chinese invaders, was an accomplished poet herself, and she ever encouraged the continued presentation of the Siamese *Rama* at court. Singu was followed by Bodawpaya (1782–1811), who was one of the strongest despots that ever sat on the Burmese throne. But his despotism was of the enlightened kind, and under his patronage, the learned atmosphere of the court remained unimpaired. The earlier half of his reign saw the rise of a Burmese court drama.

Some time about the year 1783, a young courtier came to the forefront of scholastic circles at the court. This young man, who was a typical product of the age of learning, which was also the age of triumph, had distinguished himself in various campaigns when he began his literary career by composing songs modelled on those of the Siamese *Rama*. He was essentially a scholar, learning and experimenting, and he was an accomplished student of literature, both [195] Burmese and foreign. But in spite of his great learning, he kept his own writings free from too rich an imagery and too bombastic a language; his Burmese was simple and pure. He wrote in the language of the court but without artificiality, so that his songs were not only admired at court, but understood and sung by the common people. After making his name as a song-writer, he produced various literary works of all kinds and thus enhanced his reputation, until he reached the zenith of his literary career in about the year 1785, when he composed and produced the first Burmese court play. This young

[1] Extracts from the *Ramayana*, *The Statue Play* attributed to Bhasa, and the Siamese-Burmese *Rama* play are given in appendix i.

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courtier later won fresh fame as a statesman and judge, becoming known to history as the Minister Myawaddi.[1]

As has been stated, there was at the Siamese court a companion play to *Rama*. It was known as *Aindarwuntha*. There was also a Siamese court romance of the same name and dealing with the same theme. Aindarwuntha was a prince-soldier, and he had two sets of adventures, one amorous and the other martial. Myawaddi was one of those who broke away from the tradition that the Siamese models at the Burmese court must be preserved without any substantial change. He did not want to have his hands tied through this tradition, and so he did not translate the play, *Aindarwuntha*, but translated instead the court romance. Then he dramatized the romance, and called his new play, not *Aindarwuntha* but *Eenaung*.[2] In *Eenaung*, Myawaddi rejects the heroic adventures and tells only of the hero-prince's romantic intrigues.

The play is far too long. The *Rama* play was long, too, and it took two or three days to present it entire. The court had all the leisure in the world. *Rama*, if translated, would require about 400 of these pages. *Eenaung* is longer; it would be about 600 pages. The play was written more to be read than acted, and as far as is known, it was never presented entire. Only some scenes were acted. The play on the whole is disjointed; it is merely a collection of scenes, connected only through the personality of the prince. As the adventures are purely amorous, there is no action at all. We are told occasionally that the prince has gone on a journey or that he has achieved a conquest, but the scene is always the palace. Following the Siamese style, music and song are important elements in the play, but dances and fine dresses are absent. It is not a masque.

The merit of the play lies in its language, dialogue, and characterization. It is the language of the court, refined and elegant as that of *Rama*. But a certain element of simplicity is in it, and it is not too rich in words or in imagery, so that the common people could understand and appreciate it; in short, the usual clear style of the author, which is the hall-mark of his other writings, is also found in this play. In dialogue, the play retains the freshness and liveliness of the *Rama* play. In characterization, the play is a great advance on *Rama*

[1] An account of his career is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 296.

[2] The play *Aindarwuntha* or *Eenaung* has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, on pp. 36 and 44–5.

21: Htin Aung . E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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In characterization, the play is a great advance on Rama
536* and on the Siamese original of *Aindarwuntha*. There, as in the
178 Sanskrit plays, the depiction of character was almost unknown. Rama was the perfect hero, Sita a lifeless damsel, Ravana a boastful villain. In Myawaddi's *Eenaung* the hero is shown to be full of faults, otherwise he is still lifeless and uninteresting as Rama. However, the characters of the women, the various loves of the prince, are well portrayed. True, the women pass swiftly through the play, often the interesting heroine never appears again after but one scene, and there is no character development; but the play is a rich portrait gallery where we see live women, who must have laughed and sorrowed at the court. The Sanskrit plays were written by men who did not or could not write of the miseries women suffered at the court, as the king's wives. They wrote from the point of view of men, and they would have it that to be the king's beloved was to reach the limits of womanly happiness. The Siamese court drama followed the Sanskrit
[644] in this respect. In *Eenaung*, however, we have a young courtier sympathizing with the women of the court, gently satirizing the king and showing up the disadvantages of being the king's love. The sorrows and laughter of the court maidens are well shown. Gentle satire, pathos, and light comedy keep the play alive.

The contribution made by *Eenaung* to the development of Burmese drama was no less in importance than that made by *Rama*. Of course *Eenaung* itself owed a great deal to *Rama*, but without Myawaddi's play, it seems rather doubtful that *Rama* could have done so much for Burmese drama, for the interest in human psychology and character, so essential to good drama, was absent in *Rama*. Moreover, *Eenaung* taught the Court to break away from the Siamese tradition and to develop a native drama with borrowings from and imitations of the Siamese court drama. Because many of the incidents in the play were invented by the author and not borrowed from the original Siamese court romance, it also pointed out the possibilities of an invented story as the subject of a play. In short, Myawaddi paved the way for the coming of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya.

*Eenaung* at once inspired others to imitate it. Many plays modelled on it were written by courtiers and produced at court. Although, unfortunately, none of these plays has come down to us, extracts in the form of dramatic speeches and songs have come down, and from those we can be certain that many of the court plays were not much
[562] inferior to that of the Minister Myawaddi. The most famous of the imitators was the Lady Khin Sŏn, herself a scholar and poet of much

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



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renown, whose literary works were worthy rivals in popularity to those of Myawaddi.[1] The native court plays were so popular that even *Rama* soon fell under their sway. Through their influence, the tradition of rigidly following the Siamese version was broken and destroyed, and adaptations of *Rama* in the style of *Eenaung* came to be presented at the Burmese court.

## 5. The Court Drama Reaches the People

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The latter half of Bodawpaya's reign saw the court drama becoming national instead of being confined to the narrow limits of the palace. The national interest in the drama was now so great that the king had to create a new ministry, that of the stage. The new minister greatly developed the puppet-show, which is described in a later chapter. The drama became a regular entertainment at the court, and a dramatic performance in the palace came to be looked upon as a semi-State function. Not only was the drama now looked upon as a national entertainment at the court, but the court drama itself was being spread all over the country through governors and administrative officials imitating the court and holding little dramatic performances of their own. The greatest gift the court performances gave to the acting profession was to raise its status. The actors were still looked upon with prejudice as being nothing more than beggars, but they were no longer considered as being only a little better than rogues and vagabonds. Many travelling companies also came to be looked upon with less disfavour, for they would style themselves 'the King's actors' or 'those who had acted before such-and-such a minister on such-and-such an occasion'. For their ability many actors were given rewards of money and some sort of decoration, which might be a medal or a special dress, and these the actors would wear during their performances with great pride. The Burmese actors of the period were very much in the same position as those acting companies

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[1] The fact that the Lady Khin Sôn was the rival of Myawaddi in the literary circles of the court, reflects the difference in character, as far as women were concerned, between the Burmese and most other oriental courts. Burmese women have enjoyed equal rights with men from prehistoric times: 'when greater races bound the feet or veiled the faces of their women, or doubted if she had a soul, the Burmese held her free and enthroned her as chieftainess and queen' (Harvey). Perhaps this difference in the atmosphere of the court had much to do with the sympathetic portrayal of women by Myawaddi in his *Eenaung*. In India, the fact that women were given an inferior social position is reflected in the absence of Sanskrit plays by women.

21: Htin Aung . E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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536* 538 178

thought of writing them down and preserving them. But there are accounts describing the dramatic performances of the period, and in the dramatic works of U Kyin U we find echoes of those early plays.[1] Therefore, we at least know that a national drama came into being towards the end of Bodawpaya's reign. It is interesting to note that the rise of a real national drama coincided with fresh conquests by the Burmese. Arakan and Assam fell into Burmese hands under this king.

538 178 644

With the rise of a more realistic national drama, the artificial drama of the court must naturally decay. Already the court drama itself was becoming less artificial, as we have seen, even in the hands of the court dramatists. But their plays, though far more realistic than the translation of the *Rama* play, were still artificial. Adaptations of *Rama* performed at the court were the beginnings of the decay. The decay was furthered by the popularity of U Toe's poem at Bodawpaya's court. It was read again and again by the author before the king. From such readings the court no doubt gradually went over to the national and more realistic drama, and it is perhaps legitimate to assume that plays presented at court in the closing years of the reign were mostly people's plays. The ascension of Bagyidaw to the throne in 1819 on the death of his royal grandfather destroyed finally the court drama, for his queen was of low origin, coarse, uneducated; and learned lords and ladies, poets and scholars, shunned the court. And it was in Bagyidaw's reign that the age of triumph ended with the annexation in 1824 of two of the three maritime provinces of Burma by the British. Under his descendant Mindon, who became king in 1853, the learned atmosphere of the court was fully restored, and U Pon Nya wrote his plays and produced them at court. But as his plays did not differ much from, and were dependent on, the people's drama of his day, he did not in any way revive that special court drama which entertained the Minister Myawaddi and his fellow-courtiers.

[1] The indebtedness of U Kyin U to his precursors is considered in the next chapter.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

# CHAPTER IV

## U PON NYA

### 1. The Life of U Pon Nya

U Pon Nya was born about the year 1807. His father was a minor nobleman at the court of Prince Tharrawaddy, a younger brother of King Bagyidaw (who lost the war against the British), and the young boy was brought up under the patronage of the prince. He was a precocious child and was placed under the tutorship of the most learned monk of the day. The prince rebelled against his brother and became king in 1837. U Pon Nya, in the meantime, had become a monk. During the rebellion, his father fell fighting for the prince, and the new king wanted U Pon Nya to take his father's office, but the future dramatist preferred to remain a monk. King Tharrawaddy continued to consider himself as godfather to U Pon Nya, who therefore was in constant contact with the court. On the death of that king, his son Pagan ascended the throne, and U Pon Nya left the capital for the little town of Salè, where he began to compose literary essays in about 1847. His essays and lyrics became immensely popular, and he came to be known all over the country as the 'Master of Salè', by which name he is more commonly referred to. In 1850 he became a layman again, and was appointed a court poet at the court of Prince Kanaung, a brother of the reigning king, Pagan. In 1851 Burma went to war again with the British and lost some more territory. Prince Kanaung and his other brother, Mindon, rebelled against the half-mad king. Mindon became the new king and made peace with the British. Kanaung became the crown prince, and U Pon Nya his official poet. He was then already recognized by the nation as the foremost poet, scholar and essayist of the day. He wrote astrological works and won further fame as an astrologer. He believed that he was liable to die on the scaffold and asked for a proclamation by the king exempting him from punishment by death; otherwise he begged to leave the court for the monastery. The required proclamation was made.

21: Htin Aung E-6 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4



made. In about 1855 he wrote his first play, *Padusa*. In the next year the two brothers, the king and the prince, quarrelled, and when the misunderstanding had been explained, U Pon Nya was ordered to write a play to celebrate the occasion, and *The Water-seller* was composed and presented. As reward, the king appointed him chief court-poet and created him lord of Ywazi village. He would have been made a ruling chief or official had he not been born with a crippled arm, because a man born with any defect in his limbs could not become a member of the ruling class. U Pon Nya took part in various court intrigues. Most of his plays had some hidden meaning that concerned the court, and they played an important part in the plots and counter-plots to decide who was to be heir, for though Kanaung was officially the heir, the king's sons did not accept him.

In 1865 Myingun and Myingondaing, two of the king's sons, decided to make a bid for the throne. They consulted U Pon Nya as to the most suitable time as foretold by the stars, and the poet told them that the next day at noon was the luckiest time for the rebellion. This connivance in a rebellion against his king and his master, Prince Kanaung, was a very disloyal and ungrateful act, because the fiery temper of the two princes was well known, and it was plain from the beginning that the rebellious sons intended to put to death at once their own father, and their uncle, who also happened to be the father-in-law of Myingun. U Pon Nya defended himself later by saying that he was compelled to give his opinion as to the most suitable time, because he was threatened with certain death. But he did not inform the king of the plot when the princes had left after promising him the highest rank of nobility; and though he might have been threatened with death at the beginning, he seemed to have been well content with the promised reward and quietly left the capital that night. The next day at noon, the rebellion broke out. The courts of justice where the crown prince and the wisest in the land were sitting in session were attacked, and the palace raided. The king escaped, but the crown prince and his fellow-judges were killed. The rebellion was put down the same afternoon, but by then the flower of the court and the nobility had perished. The two rebels escaped, Myingondaing to die of fever at Rangoon, and Myingun to retirement in French Indo-China. U Pon Nya was arrested and tried on a charge of treason by the king himself, and though a sentence of death was clearly deserved,

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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536* 669 644 the king remembered the proclamation exempting the poet from punishment by death, and as he had a great admiration for the works of the dramatist, U Pon Nya was merely sent to the house of the governor of the city as a prisoner on parole. Unfortunately, the junior wives of the governor and the ladies at his court took too great an interest in the comfort of the prisoner, and the governor became extremely jealous. After three months of what he suspected to be romantic intrigues between his prisoner and his ladies, the governor decided to put U Pon Nya to death. So one night in 1866 the poet was secretly executed, and the body disposed of never to be discovered, under the orders of the governor. A few weeks after the secret execution, the king granted full pardon to U Pon Nya, believing him to be still alive. Only then was the truth discovered, and when the news was reported to the king, he said wearily: 'Alas, a dog has killed a man.'

### 2. *Paduma*

536* The story is taken without any modification from a *Jataka*. A king has seven sons, and he is warned by his ministers that the princes might rebel. In spite of his great love for his sons, the king has no choice but to exile them with their princesses. The seven princes and their consorts leave the capital, but soon lose their way in the forest. There is no food, and the younger princes beg their eldest brother, Paduma, to agree to their plan of killing and eating their princesses. Paduma tries to argue against the proposal, but realizes that his arguments are in vain, for the six brothers are maddened with hunger. He has no other way of escape but to flee with his consort. So before dawn Paduma and his princess run away from the others. The sun rises and the two are in great agony through the heat. They reach a stretch of sand, and Paduma is cheered because sand is usually found near a river. But the very sand which cheers Paduma increases the heat and burns the delicate feet of the princess. She can go no further and begs the prince to kill her; she would then be relieved from her agony, and he would have a better chance of saving himself alone. But the prince cheers her by encouraging words, and piercing his flesh with his sword, makes the princess drink the blood to quench her thirst. Then he puts her on his shoulder and continues the journey. Soon they reach a wide river, on whose banks grow fruit trees, and safety at last seems assured. As they rest, they hear a cry for help and see a man tied to a raft, floating helplessly down the river. The princess pities him,

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
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536* [674] U Kyin U, the plays produced at court were plays which had been produced outside. During the troublesome period of the two Anglo-Burmese wars of 1824 and 1852–6, although palace dramatic performances were rare because of the fact that the court was in disgrace and disunion, the courtiers read and studied U Kyin U's plays. As has been stated, the acceptance and popularity of U Kyin U as the greatest dramatist by both the court and the people prevented any possibility of the old court drama being revived. But there were two other factors which acted against such revival: first, since the time of U Kyin U, the production of a play even at court was entirely in the hands of professional actors, and so U Pon Nya had to conform to the practice and tradition of those who would produce his plays; second, the fact that U Pon Nya was a realist prevented him from ever writing artificial court plays of the old type.

U Kyin U was a romanticist. The world depicted in *Daywagonban* and *Parpahein* was a world of fantasy and romance. Princes fought and struggled, heroes accomplished valiant deeds, and gods and demons and animals shared adventures with princes and princesses. Even in *Mahaw*, in spite of the absence of demons and gods, the atmosphere of the play, with its bombastic speeches and its love-scene between the magpie and parrot, was romantic. In U Pon Nya's plays, the atmosphere of romance is missing. He does not use animals as characters, except in *Paduma*, where the crocodile contributes to the main action by saving the prince, and by driving home the moral that even animals are wiser than women; but he satirizes the uncontrolled employment of animals as characters, by ironically making the crocodile say learned and serious words which appear ridiculous in the mouth of an animal, and he is half apologetic about using the crocodile, for he makes it say in the address to the orchestra after Paduma has been taken back to his city: 'I have come only to make you smile. Let that smile be increased into laughter, while I return to my forest. . . .' The difference in the use of supernatural characters also contributes to the difference in atmosphere. In U Kyin U's work the gods and demons were in keeping with the romantic atmosphere. On the whole they lacked seriousness of purpose, joining in the struggles of human beings through their own love of romance and adventure. They appeared so petty in the way they fought and quarrelled; the tree-god in *Daywagonban* indulged in undignified bragging when Daywagonban accused him of having stolen his princess, and it was childish and silly of Daywagonban to indulge

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

374. OFFICIAL PASSING THE STREET.

representatives they are, attaining their position by the tacit suffrages of the public. Their sphere is not defined nor are their numbers fixed in any way. Influence is naturally centred in a few of the ablest, but these are not permitted to usurp it for themselves. The loyalty of the villagers rests on the reciprocal regard of the elders for the sentiments of the community; the *lûdyis*, though they moderate popular feeling, never take an unpopular course. The affairs which they manage are the local festivals and the religious undertakings in which the public life of the country centres and in which conflicting aims have to be conciliated. The laying out of ordinary irrigation channels and other village works are arranged by the *lûdyis*. They witness marriages and divorces, and generally regulate the social life of the people. A tacit agreement, parallel to that between the villagers and their headmen, bound the king and the people, whose sentiments were reflected by officials drawn from their midst.

If, not content with the consideration accruing through age and natural gifts for leadership, and with managing a business of his own, our Burman aspired to a public career, he might enter official life by attaching himself to the suite of some functionary. This he would do at first in a menial capacity, and, as he found favour, he might become secretary, deputy, and eventually attain to the chief dignities. A scion of royalty just out of his teens would be given a town or province to live on (*myoza*), as well as to govern by the help of deputies and advisers. But a son of the people would be gray before he climbed to such a position. The *myoza* had to remit a

375. BURMAN JUDGE PROCEEDING TO COURT.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
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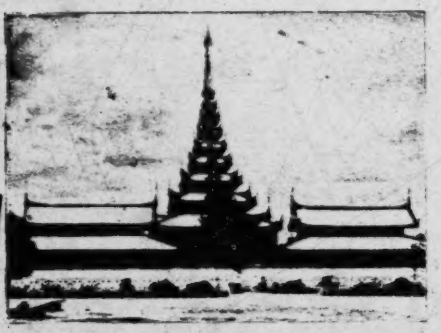

360. PALACE FRONT AND SPIRE.

The British administration preserves the native official machinery, from the *thadyt* to the *myoòk*, augmenting the numbers so as to reach every part of the area and curtailing the powers. Under native *régime* even *thadyts* might be *dâbaing*. The new *régime* takes account of the village *lûdyts* for the sake of their moral influence; many of them have been invested with power to compose differences up to small amounts, and some of the more prominent are honorary magistrates. Independent spirit is on the increase; the officials have to reckon with a new temper in the people. Nevertheless, in municipal councils the supineness and complaisance of the native members are calculated to stultify the position accorded to them. Road-making and sanitation do not arouse their interest, and the local excise, the matter they long to deal with, is excluded from their jurisdiction (*cf.* p. 157). The *thadyt* personally measures the fields, collects the land-tax and poll-tax from house to house, in such a circle as he can make the circuit of twice a year, and receives commission on the amount. He reports on matters within his circle. As many revenue-circles as a native magistrate can personally control are united into a township, under a *myoòk*, who at the same time supervises the co-ordinate grades of police distributed in the township. He publicly tries criminal and civil cases, under his powers as magistrate, by codes of law and procedure accessible to everybody. These codes form the most valuable models of system, in the vernacular, up to the present. By their help both judges and advocates have trained themselves in law. Five to eight townships, according to facilities for

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361. BURMAN PRINCESS.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

592. ROYAL INSIGNIA.

supervision, are combined into a district under a European magistrate, the Deputy Commissioner, who has a European officer for district superintendent of police, commanding an average force of four hundred native constables. At the district headquarters are a police-depôt, treasury, jail and hospital, besides courthouses and offices. The district officer hears appeals from the *myoôks*, and tries all offences except the gravest and heavy civil suits. This organisation is the backbone of the civil government, the 'Commission.' There are thirty-six such districts, and four hundred native magistrates, on salaries of one hundred to eight hundred rupees a month, besides one hundred and twenty-five native honorary magistrates. The success of this economical administration, organised by Sir Arthur Phayre, in ensuring the safety of life and property and the fulfilment of contracts has given a new value to enterprise and thrift. The British garrison of Burma in 1900 consisted of three thousand European and seven thousand five hundred Indian regular troops.

To return to native Burma—In the centre of the capital, and by euphemism of creation, rises the *pyatthat* which canopies the principal throne in the great hall of audience, where envoys and tributary princes used to be received. Here also the princes of his own blood and the high officers of state paid court to the king on *gadáw-ne*, days when they craved pardon of the king for their shortcomings. The throne (No. 1) is ascended by a stair at the back, leading from the council-room of the king's cabinet of palace ministers, who were the medium of communication with the *Hlutdaw*. On such occa-

593. ANCIENT CAPITAL, SAGAING.

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4



644 on such occa-
[643] sions the king appeared in the royal insignia, which otherwise only figure as emblems of state. The insignia in the illustration are surmounted by a queen's crown (*sìbòn*). The shape of a king's crown is seen in Nos. 151 and 425. There
[346] being but a single palace and thousands of *kyaungz* and temples, the palace
[344] appears to resemble a *kyaung*. But the converse is the fact; the *kyaung* it is which in virtue of its religious character shares the distinction of the palace. The most recent style adopted by the Burman sovereigns was *Shin-Bayìn*—Lord of Lords. A chief title was *Sinbyù Shin*—Lord of the White Elephant. Every subject prostrated himself in the presence of the king, with face averted from the effulgence of the royal countenance. An official called *thandawzìn* used to repeat aloud the words uttered by the king. The ensign betokening the presence of the king and of the chief queen (*mìbayà*) is the *tìbyù* (p. 101). Two to eight were borne according to the solemnity of the occasion. The chief queens were frequently half-sisters of the kings. For all the royal acts, the lying, rising, eating, speaking, there are euphemisms proper to the occasion; one of the most current of these is *shwepaùddaw*—the golden foot. At his demise the sovereign is said to migrate to the abode of *nats* or delectable land; the staff of his *tìbyù* was broken. The paraphernalia of the king's service were elaborate; but in his attitude to the *yahàn* he comported himself as an ordinary man. The Royal White Elephant was maintained in great pomp; it ate and drank out of golden vessels and had a retinue for its service. An elephant really white—probably an albino—was captured in 1805, but was pampered so that it died. A second was captured in 1806 which lived for fifty years. Other "white elephants" kept for state have enjoyed their reputation in virtue of possessing certain assumed criteria of the "white" variety, as to the number of the toes, direction of the tail-tuft and other distinctions, without regard to the colour of the skin.

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[776] [532] [588] [231]

204. CARVED FIGURE OF NAT.

644 Change of capital at the accession of a new sovereign was characteristic of
633 Burman empire, even when there was no change of dynasty or other political convulsion. Events of the latter kind were no doubt the original reasons of such changes. Next to Pagán, Sagáing, on the right bank of the Irawadi, facing the flat and now desolate site of Ava, is the most impressive of the

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

385. TEMPLES RAISED BY A MODERN KING (THE KUTHODAW p. 122).

historic centres of Burman dominion. Sagáing was abandoned for the last time in 1776 for a new capital at Amayapôya (*Amarapúra* — Abode of Immortals) half-way between Ava (*Inwa*) and the modern capital Mandalé, which was founded in 1857, after the accession of King Mindôn Min. The most ancient capital is Tagáung, one hundred miles north of Mandalé. Other capitals were Shwebô, Myinzaing, Pannya. The capitals of the Taláing dominion were Thatôn, Pegu, and Prome (*Pye*). Rangoon (*Yangôn*), at the meeting point of five navigable channels, and with anchorage for the largest ships, has out-distanced all competitors since the modern development of commerce.

For the history of Burma the only available source is the official chronicle kept by command of the kings—*mahá-yazawín*. The first part is occupied with the legendary origin of the race from the cloud-dwellers—*Byamma* (the Burman form of *Brahma*).* The names and doings of legendary persons follow, and lines of legendary kings. The earliest historical facts which emerge are the founding of Tagáung, and incidents relating to the Buddha and the councils of his church in India. It is believed by Phayre that the *Savanna Bhumi* of ancient Indian books refers to Thatôn, and that under *Chryse Chersonesus* Ptolemy refers to the Eastern Peninsula of Asia. We do not reach a connected history till the founding of Pagán about 100 A.D. From that epoch onwards the history of the peninsula, until the Burman Empire was consolidated and the dynasty of

386. FIGURES OF BYAMMA (EMBROIDERY).

* The name is also written *Myamma*, but commonly pronounced *Bama*, of which "Burma(h)" and "Birma" are corruptions.